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Virginia Energy Efficiency Council

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2025

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# ABOUT US



The Virginia Energy Efficiency Council is the voice for the energy efficiency industry in the Commonwealth.

Founded in 2012, VAEEC is a 501c3 organization, headquartered in Richmond, whose goal is to facilitate discussions and share resources to advance energy efficiency throughout the Commonwealth. We engage our members to identify barriers to and opportunities for energy efficiency advancement, and to develop strong, fact-based, and balanced industry voice before local, state, and national policymakers and regulators.

Our diverse group of over 100 members include Fortune 500 companies nonprofits, local governments, state agencies, and more whose vision is for energy efficiency to be an integral part of Virginia's economy and clean energy future.

*We are a broad coalition whose **mission** is to facilitate discussions and share resources to advance energy efficiency in Virginia.*

*Our **vision** is for energy efficiency to be an integral part of the Commonwealth's economy and clean energy future.*

**Connecting Leaders. Amplifying Voices.**

# From the Executive Director

The Virginia Energy Efficiency Council has been **bringing together voices** from the energy efficiency sector to **advance policies and programs that help our industry grow**. The objectives laid out in the following pages are a culmination of months of work, gathering feedback from our membership, committees, and Board of Directors, enabling us to center our members' top priorities as we developed our roadmap for the next three years.

The past several years have been transformative for the energy efficiency industry - despite the pandemic taking its toll on every facet of life for most of it. Even with the massive setbacks, Virginia was able to break into the **top 20 states for energy efficiency** on the ACEEE scorecard, and rank **10th on energy efficiency jobs nationwide**, in the E4TheFuture Jobs Report.

This progress in the face of adversity would not have been possible without our members. We must **continue this momentum** in the coming years, while also **holding the line on past progress**, which is why I am excited to share our new Strategic Plan.

As we continue to build our strong, fact-based, and balanced industry voice, we hope readers will join us in our dedication to making our vision a reality.

*Chelsea Harnish*

Chelsea Harnish, VAEEC Executive Director



# Foundations

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Virginia has experienced transformative growth in energy efficiency policy and adoption in the three years since our last strategic plan. During that time, VAEEC has truly stepped into our role as **the voice of the energy efficiency industry in the Commonwealth.**

We were instrumental in the passage of the landmark **Virginia Clean Economy Act**. We worked with Dominion Energy to **update the definition of low-income households**, ensuring more residents received services from their programs. We introduced a bill to **remove a roof exemption** that prevented some of our members from providing holistic energy performance contract options to their clients. We successfully advocated for **blower door testing** and **increased ceiling insulation** in the Uniform Statewide Building Code and supported legislation to expand public **building performance standards**. We led the call for funds from the **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative** to help Virginians most in need of weatherization services. We hosted and attended events that showcased innovations in **energy efficiency technology**, and we helped launch the **statewide C-PACE program**.

Despite this success, challenges exist that could roll back some of this progress the industry has made. **This plan represents our commitment to preserving our gains, while building on the momentum towards continued progress across Virginia.**

# Previous Plan Goals

- **Objective 1:** Maximize the deployment and success of both gas and electric utility energy efficiency programs and technologies in Virginia.
- **Objective 2:** Position VAEEC as a more visible and valuable resource for local governments and state agencies and help increase their effectiveness in advancing energy efficiency throughout the Commonwealth.
- **Objective 3:** Leverage industry expertise, both within and outside VAEEC membership, to identify opportunities for the advancement of new energy efficiency technologies and ensure energy efficiency remains part of the conversations regarding strategic electrification.

## Planning Process

VAEEC initiates strategic planning every three years. For the past three cycles, we have worked with a professional facilitation firm to host a planning retreat for our Board of Directors and staff. For this planning phase, we incorporated feedback from our members by holding ideation sessions with each of our member-only committees and working groups. The comments and ideas gathered from these sessions formed the foundation for our planning process. At the retreat, the VAEEC Board and staff spent two days discussing the topics identified by our membership to form the outcomes and strategies for this Strategic Plan. The Board approved the final 2023-2025 Strategic Plan on September 27, 2022.

# Progress & Preservation

**Over the last three years, there has been tremendous progress made to advance energy efficiency in Virginia.**

In 2020, Virginia passed the Virginia Clean Economy Act (VCEA) and joined the Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI), which led business giants such as Amazon and LEGO to call our state home.

**However, nothing is guaranteed.**

We've seen the difference a single year can make in terms of policy and regulation, as well as supply chain and workforce issues. Regardless of the challenges, we must remain prepared to protect the progress we have made.

Over the next three years, we will **preserve our gains, while continuing to advance energy efficiency to every region of the Commonwealth.**

## 2020-2022 *Highlights*

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- *Passage of the VCEA*
- *Virginia becoming the first southern state to join RGGI and the only RGGI state to allocate 50% of carbon-trading funds to make low-income housing more energy-efficient*
- *Ranking #20 on the 2022 ACEEE state scorecard, and #1 in the South*
- *Completion of the first C-PACE project and the launch of Virginia's statewide C-PACE program*
- *Updated Energy Performance Contracting law to remove the roof exemption*
- *Building code advancements, including blower door testing & higher R-value requirements for ceiling insulation*
- *Hosted eight educational events focused on energy efficiency technologies*
- *Revision of Dominion Energy's low-income eligibility criteria to expand program access*

# Energy Efficiency in Action

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When a home is in severe disrepair, it is disqualified from federal weatherization services, thereby forcing Weatherization Assistance Providers (WAPs) to walk away, or defer, the project. Virginia's participation in the **Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative (RGGI)** has been the solution to this problem. RGGI funding allows WAPs to **expand their scope of services** through the Weatherization Deferral Repair (WDR) program. WAPs are now able to make major upgrades to homes, improving the health and safety of residents.

In the first 18 months of the program's existence, **project:HOMES**, a weatherization provider whose service territory includes Richmond, parts of Hampton Roads, and the Eastern Shore, provided WDR services to 177 single family homes, as well as an emergency shelter and two multifamily properties. **WDR is reshaping how weatherization providers do their work.**

On the Eastern Shore, project:HOMES used WDR funds to provide new roofs, safe heating systems, mold remediation, and plumbing repairs to 12 households. These **residents now live in safe, dry homes** with reduced risk of fire, carbon monoxide poisoning, and breathing problems. WDR funds also allowed the organization to hire two new full-time roles and 30+ local subcontractors.



*Photo courtesy of project:HOMES*

# Strategic Plan Overview

**Guiding Principles:** While creating this plan, we used three overarching themes to guide how we crafted our new objectives and strategies.

- **Education & Messaging:** Across the industry, people look to the VAEEC as a resource for valuable, reliable, fact-based information on energy efficiency in Virginia. That's why we work to ensure the right information is available to consumers, legislators, decision makers, and more.
- **Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion:** No one should be left behind while striving for a clean energy future. The VAEEC is committed to centering Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in our member outreach, workforce training, and programmatic work.
- **Keeping Energy Efficiency at the Forefront:** Strong energy efficiency goals are critical in the transition to a 100% clean energy future that is inexpensive and equitable. As more establishments move towards decarbonization and electrification goals, it is vital to keep energy efficiency at the forefront of these conversations.



**Safeguard & Enhance** energy efficiency funding and initiatives in order to reduce demand and benefit all Virginians

Safeguard Virginia's participation in RGGI and the allocations for energy-efficient housing

Support strong utility, state, and municipal programs and robust building codes and performance standards

Leverage industry expertise in Virginia to match workforce needs with career development and training opportunities

Ensure energy efficiency is integral to broader concepts, such as decarbonization, resiliency, and grid modernization



## Expand Partnerships & Collaborations

to diversify engagement and perspectives

Diversify membership and leadership to reflect the demographics of Virginia (race, gender, age, income, etc.)

*Identifying gaps in representation and engagement with members and partners*

*Assessing outreach strategies to potential new members*

Evaluate opportunities to collaborate with and support similar organizations



## Continue providing resources & guidance

to decision-makers to expand energy efficiency implementation across Virginia

Ensure decision-makers understand the foundational importance and economic opportunities of energy efficiency

Curate resources on advanced energy efficiency technologies and topics

# Objective #1

## Safeguard & Enhance

energy efficiency funding and initiatives in order to reduce demand and benefit all Virginians



# Strategies

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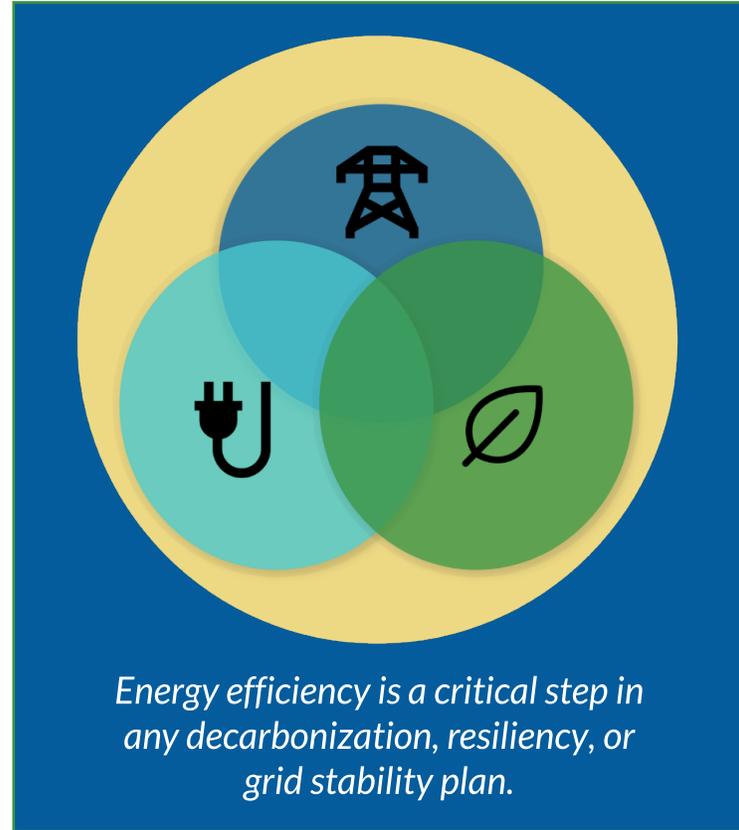
1. Safeguard Virginia's participation in **RGGI** and the allocations for energy-efficient housing
2. Support strong utility, state, and municipal programs and robust **building codes and performance** standards
3. Leverage industry expertise in Virginia to match **workforce** needs with career development and training opportunities
4. Ensure energy efficiency is integral to **broader concepts** such as:
  - a. Decarbonization;
  - b. Resiliency; and
  - c. Grid Modernization

## *EE Now & EE Next*

The Virginia Clean Economy Act sets forth energy savings goals through 2025, which is also the final year of this plan. This, along with the ongoing attempts to remove Virginia from RGGI, highlight the importance of holding the line on past progress.

However, just safeguarding past progress would put our industry at risk of missing out on advancing energy efficiency through workforce development, decarbonization, and resiliency opportunities.

**We must focus on the bright future, while also continuing to protect past accomplishments.**

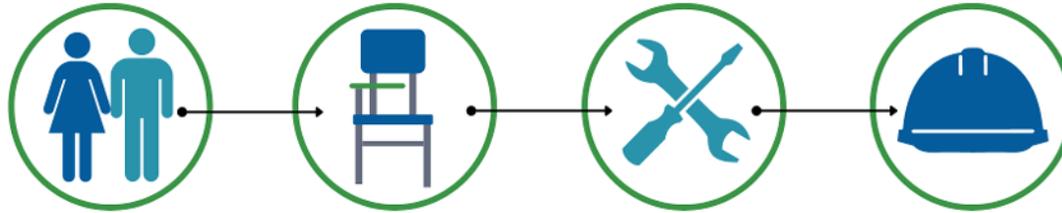


# *Workforce Development*

With demand for energy efficiency products and services skyrocketing, and 40% of construction workers projected to retire by 2030, our industry is already feeling a pinch on resources. Couple that with the new opportunities created through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and the Inflation Reduction Act and the energy efficiency industry is positioned for unprecedented growth. Which begs the question, **who will do this work?** The VAEEC team has been working over the past year with a small group of our members and partners to tackle that answer.

Enter the **Virginia Energy Efficiency Workforce Initiative**. We envision this initiative as a **holistic approach** that will braid existing entities with new funding and resources to take new workers from **recruitment to training to placement and retention**. The goal is to utilize federal funding for a localized pilot program, which we will then scale over time. The program will target Historically Economically Disadvantaged Communities and identify recruits who can perform services and receive training in their community, bolstering the circular economy and improving lives at scale.

# Workforce Development Pipeline & Phases



Student/Worker

Classroom  
Training

Field  
Training

Employed

## IDENTIFY

Target outreach in Historically Economically Disadvantaged Communities



## RECRUIT

Partner with existing local programs to find recruits



## TRAIN

Classroom and work-based learning to prepare for success in the field



## RETAIN

Placement in well-paying, local jobs that also benefit the community



## Objective #2

### Expand VAEEC's Partnerships & Collaborations

to diversify engagement & perspectives



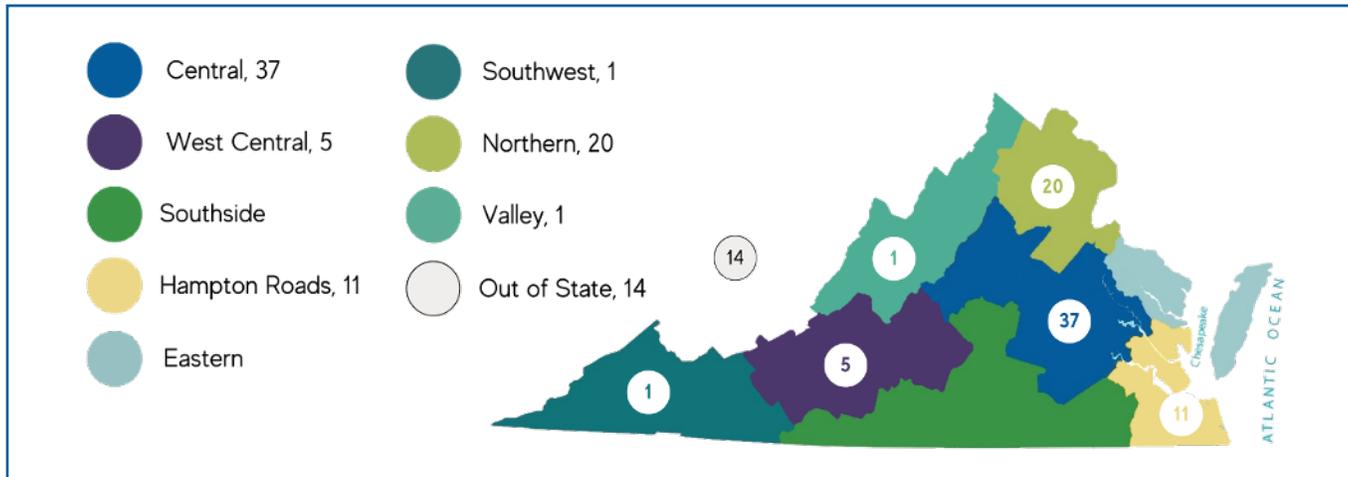
## Strategies

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1. **Diversify membership and leadership** to reflect the demographics of Virginia (race, gender, age, income, education level, industry/trade, geography) by:
  - a. Identifying gaps in representation and engagement with members and partners; and
  - b. Assessing outreach strategies to potential new members
2. Evaluate **opportunities to collaborate with and support** similar organizations

# Membership

Over 8.5 million people call Virginia home, spread over 95 counties and 38 cities. However, VAEEC membership tends to be concentrated around major population centers. We want to **expand our membership to reflect the people of the Commonwealth**, whether that's race, gender, age, income, or geography. Moreover, we want to ensure that our organization **benefits all Virginians** by collaborating with nontraditional partners.



*VAEEC member headquarter locations as of Q4 2022.*

# Objective #3

## Continue Providing Resources & Guidance to decision-makers to expand energy efficiency implementation across Virginia



# Strategies

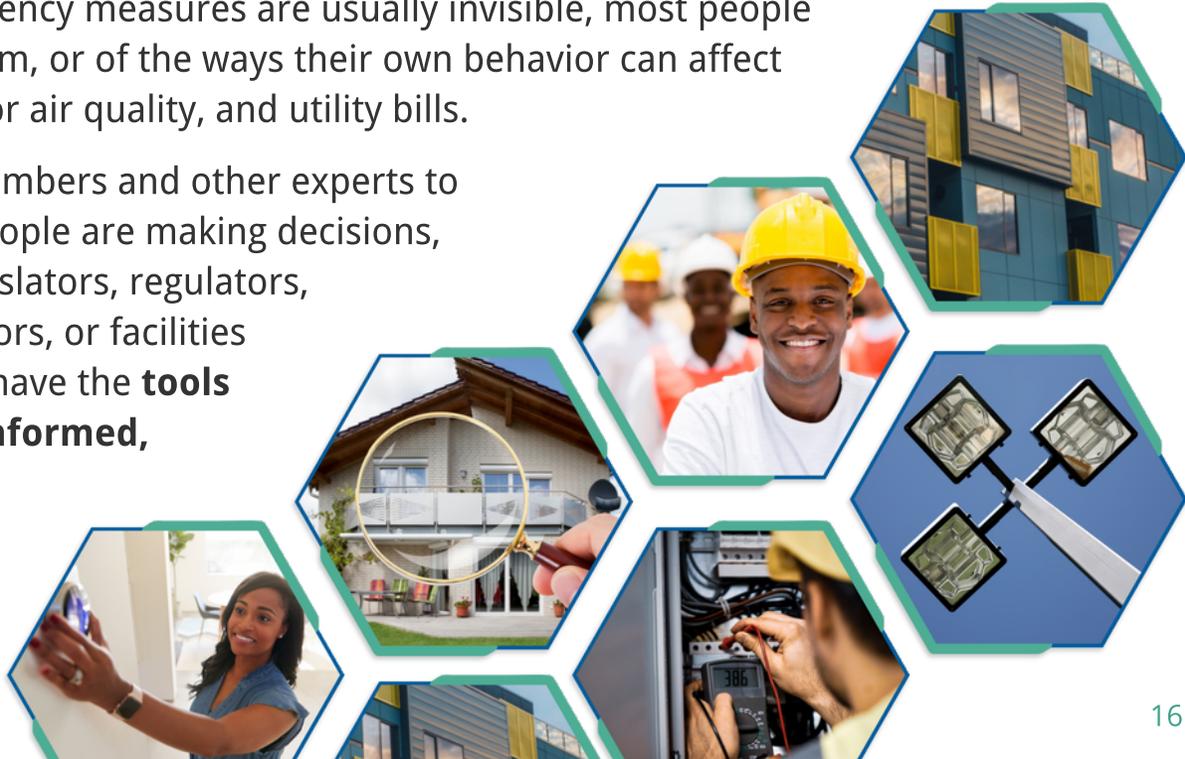
1. Ensure decision-makers understand the **foundational importance and economic opportunities** of energy efficiency
2. **Curate resources** on advanced energy efficiency technologies and topics

# Education & Messaging

There is a clear, demonstrated need to ensure that decision makers are knowledgeable on what energy efficiency is and why it is important.

Because energy efficiency measures are usually invisible, most people don't think about them, or of the ways their own behavior can affect building safety, indoor air quality, and utility bills.

We work with our members and other experts to ensure that, when people are making decisions, whether they are legislators, regulators, program administrators, or facilities managers, that they have the **tools to make the most informed, energy-efficient choices.**



# Staff

**CHELSEA HARNISH**  
Executive Director

**JESSICA GREENE**  
Outreach Director

**REBECCA HUI**  
Member Services Manager

# Board of Directors

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Henrico County



# Member Testimonials

See what our members are saying about the VAEEC and our work

“VAEEC events are a great opportunity to network with colleagues and potential new clients. I really like the hybrid approach because it allows **more people to participate** virtually, while still reserving an opportunity for **in-person interaction**. The virtual day also allows for **even greater coverage of topics** by bringing in **experts** from around the country.” - Dave Gelman, VEIC



“We joined VAEEC because it's the **only organization dedicated to promoting energy efficiency** in the state through **effective and thoughtful policies, programs, and leadership**.”  
- Abby Johnson, *Virginia PACE Authority*

“The RGGI funds are a game-changer in our ability to serve the Eastern Shore. These funds **help residents, stabilize the housing stock, and support the local workforce**. VAEEC was the first to realize how important these funds could be for low-income Virginians. They have helped us become **better advocates** for Virginia residents and energy conservation by sharing our success stories with decision makers.” - Kerri Walker, *project:HOMES*





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**STRATEGIC PLAN**  
**2023-2025**

Approved by the VAEEC Board of Directors  
September 2022



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